

## **Holiday Tips from MassDEP: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Be Green**

During the holiday season, Massachusetts' residents produce about 25 percent more trash compared to any other time of year. Not only do we produce more trash, but we also use 5 percent more energy during the holiday season.

To trim down on all that waste – and save you time, money, energy, and stress during this busy time of year – the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) offers some simple tips to “be green” this holiday season:

- **Buy green.**
  - Purchase recycled-content gifts.
  - About 40 percent of all battery sales occur during the holiday season. Buy rechargeable batteries. Many stores have drop-off bins for the safe recycling of old batteries. To recycle old rechargeable batteries and cell phones, the Rechargeable Battery Recycling Corporation, a non-profit organization, has a locator to find drop-off locations at:  
<http://www.rbrc.org/call2recycle/dropoff/index.php>
  - Thousands of paper and plastic shopping bags end up in landfills every year. Reduce waste by remembering to bring your reusable tote bag while shopping.
- **Choose green wrapping.** Decorative boxes, gift bags, and tins can be reused, instead of disposable wrapping paper, which is not recyclable. Use paper bags or newspaper to wrap your gift and then use a reusable ribbon, bow, or beads to decorate it.
- **Green your holiday card.** Use old holiday cards to create new cards by cutting the picture off and using it to make a new card or a gift tag. If you buy cards, find ones made of recycled content. If so inclined, you can save paper by sending E-cards, which is gaining in popularity.
- **Save energy.** You can save a lot of energy simply by:
  - Using a timer on your house and Christmas tree lights to avoid keeping the lights on all night.
  - Purchase LED Christmas Lights. Light-Emitting Diodes (LEDs) are a new lighting technology that is up to 90 percent more efficient than its incandescent counterpart. A household burning 10 strands of lights for eight hours a day for a month would spend about \$127 to light large, incandescent bulbs, \$7.20 for traditional mini-lights, and just 72 cents for LEDs. These newer bulbs are available at most stores that sell Christmas lights, and they are sturdy, last up to 20 years, and barely warm up, thus reducing fire concerns.
  - Using energy-saving fluorescent light bulbs (or give one as a gift!). Compact fluorescent bulbs last longer and use about a quarter to a third of the energy of an incandescent bulb. By substituting a compact fluorescent light for a standard bulb,

you can prevent the emission of 5,000 pounds of carbon dioxide and reduce your electric bill by more than \$100 over the life of those bulbs.

- **Recycle as much as possible.** Recycling saves money. Over 300 communities in Massachusetts provide for recycling of common items like paper, cans, bottles, and cardboard. Don't forget to recycle aluminum foil, which is used so much at this time of year. Paper recycling alone would make a big difference. Did you know:
  - Scrap paper is now the number one American export by volume, and exports of U.S. scrap grew to \$8.4 billion last year, more than double the 1999 total.
  - The strong international demand for paper has raised payments for recycled paper to approximately \$100 per ton.
  - Massachusetts' residents and businesses throw away approximately 1.5 million tons of paper a year, with an estimated value of more than \$100 million.
- **Save gas and reduce air pollution.** Spare the air, and commit to minimizing your car use whenever possible. Take public transportation, carpool with friends, or walk when you go shopping or to holiday parties. You'll be rewarded with both more exercise and cleaner air.
- **"Tree-cycle" after the holidays.** More than 200 Massachusetts towns and cities provide venues for the collection of cut Christmas trees, which are then recycled into compost or mulch. Check out these Tree-Cycling Facts:
  - 93 percent of the respondents from a national survey recycle their Christmas tree in some type of community program.
  - Massachusetts' residents can get information about tree recycling at [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) (enter a five-digit zip code to find your local curbside or drop-off program).
  - What happens to those trees? The top five uses are:
    - Chipping – used for everything from mulch to hiking trails
    - Beachfront erosion prevention
    - Lake and river shoreline stabilization
    - Fish habitat, and
    - River delta sedimentation management

Learn more about buying green, reducing holiday waste, recycling, and "tree-cycling" in your community by visiting [www.earth911.org](http://www.earth911.org) or MassDEP's web site at: <http://www.mass.gov/dep/recycle/>.

MassDEP is responsible for ensuring clean air and water, safe management and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes, timely cleanup of hazardous waste sites and spills, and the preservation of wetlands and coastal resources.

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